6 Section A The Commercial Appeal, Memphis, Sunday, Nov. 26, 1978 *****

Story By Inmate Doubted On Cult

A 30-year-old Memphis man, held at Shelby County Jail East since Oct. 12 on a bad-check charge, yesterday confirmed reports he had knowledge of a plan by the People's Temple to burglarize the Memphis home of lawyer Mark Lane several weeks ago.

The Memphis FBI office, however, strongly discounted the inmate's involvement in the alleged plot, saying, "the whole allegation is so preposterous and I have no idea of where it came from."

The allegation surfaced Friday in a television newscast.

The inmate, Michael Lanfranchi, told The Commercial Appeal by telephone yesterday that he is not free to tell the whole story about his knowledge of the cult, whose members at a Guyana commune last week murdered a U.S. representative and four others, before staging a mass murder-suicide rite that has claimed more than 900 victims.

"It's kind of complicated and the first I heard of it was when all the newspeople starting calling out here a couple of days ago," Lanfranchi said.

"It's all kind of complicated and I haven't given anybody any kind of statement. Everything I've said has been used out of context and twisted around. I haven't talked to anybody yet and I want it put down like it is."

According to televised reports, Lanfranchi was contacted three or four weeks ago by the People's Temple and offered freedom from jail in return for burglarizing Lane's home. The report said Lanfranchi's name and telephone number appeared on a piece of paper found in the home of the cult's leader, Rev. Jim Jones.

The allegations prompted Lane to demand an FBI investigation Friday. Lane was in Guyana at the time of the attack on Rep. Leo Ryan (D-Calif.) and his party.

Lanfranchi said he did not know how his telephone number might have come into Jones' possession.

Lane, on learning of the allegations Friday, said he has no safe or papers that would have been valuable to the People's Temple.

At the Memphis FBI office, agent Dick Blay confirmed that the FBI talked with Lanfranchi at the jail "a couple of days ago."

Blay said Lane "asked us if there was anything to it (the alleged burglary plans) and whether we had any information regarding the allegations Lanfranchi was involved. We have no basis for that allegation at all. He said he understands a TV network in Atlanta learned of the alleged burglary plan and relayed the information to its affiliate station here."